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ABSTRACT

One of a series of work-based interviews about occupations in Australia, this booklet presents a personal interview with a chef about her job. The following questions are answered: what the chef does, why the person chose the field of employment, how the person found out about the job, what she does and doesn't like about it, what kind of training was needed, what the chef does during a working week, her co-workers, the hours, and how the work contributes to society. Cartoons are used to enliven the material, and a glossary of 33 words is included. Although designed to be used in literacy classes with adult new readers, the booklets are also appropriate for use with elementary and secondary students in career exploration and career education. (KC)

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ED 399 453

Hazel Edwards'

# Workdays

a day in the life of ...

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

the Chef

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# Workdays

a day in the life of ...

## the Chef

Name Joan Beredimas

Aged 27

Workdays
a day in the life of...
the Chef

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## WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?

In the role of second chef, I am responsible for *a la carte*, function work and the general day to day running of the kitchen under the chef. It's a 'hands on' *environment*.

A chef is in control of the kitchen, doing the ordering and overseeing the staff and running of the kitchen. It's a management position. Most of the *executive* chefs are male, not because there aren't females capable of the job but because most have families which they put first.

## WHAT DOES WORK MEAN TO YOU?

Works means providing a product or a service and to me, it's enjoyable. Apart from the money, I'm rewarded by the *feedback*, with good criticism from customers and in the press.

Will Goodwin
STAFF ONLY
THE CHEF IS (USUALLY) IN CONTROL.

## WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS JOB?

I've always enjoyed working with food and look at it from a creative angle. Being a chef was my first choice. At home I did a lot of cooking. We went out to restaurants when I was very young, and I loved the presentation of food.

Then I enjoyed going to the markets with my mother and experimenting with new foods. At school I had a great *home economics* teacher who suggested looking at the career in a little more depth. There were no chefs in our family, but my father usually did the cooking.

## WHAT SKILLS OR TRAINING DID YOU NEED?

At Emily McPherson College, I did a three year Applied Science diploma in Home Economics but now, I think I should have done a Food Services course.

The Home Economics course took me into social welfare and things to do with the home, whereas the Food Services course was more 'hands on', quantity cooking and hotel management. But I learnt to combine the two because I worked in restaurants while I was studying.

After that, I worked with Jenny Craig's Weight Loss Centres for two years to *delve* more into the *nutritional* and social side of food. Then I moved to Adelaide as a partner in an Indian restaurant. I learnt a new *cuisine* and a different way of preparing and presenting food. Mainly, it's 'on the job' training.

In school you learn the basics of food preparation and the *theory* of what happens and why it happens. In the kitchen you learn the short cuts. You *compromise* with the foods you do have and the number of people with whom you work. So if you're short handed, you can do things a little bit faster and still achieve the same results.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DURING A WEEK?

From 7 o'clock in the morning, I do the mis-en plus which is the pre-preparation, until about 10 o'clock which is the first break. From then on, it's getting the little bits tidied up ready for the a la carte. Small orders for morning tea come in all the time. Then the lunch period.

Early in the week, for the first couple of days, it's slower. Later in the week is busier. Afternoon tea is served. At least half a dozen meetings are catered for with home made biscuits and cakes. There's a lot of practical cooking. Being a retail store, we have to cater for functions such as boardroom meetings. There might be only ten minutes notice, so everything must be prepared beforehand.

The General Manager likes to entertain here in the store, so we have a lot of V.I.P. lunches. There might also be larger cocktail parties of up to 500 in the store. Recently we've had about one a month. A cocktail party might take you up to midnight, so it's a long day. The restaurant is not open at weekends.

## WHAT'S THE WORK LIKE?

People assume that chefs cook beautiful meals and everything always comes out right. But you have a lot of failures. In this kitchen if it doesn't look right, you throw the food out immediately and start again.

It's a high pressure job with time constraints. If someone is ill, you take on their job, so you must be *versatile*.

Lots of people think that being a chef is only cooking, but you wash dishes and there's a lot of hard, heavy labour.

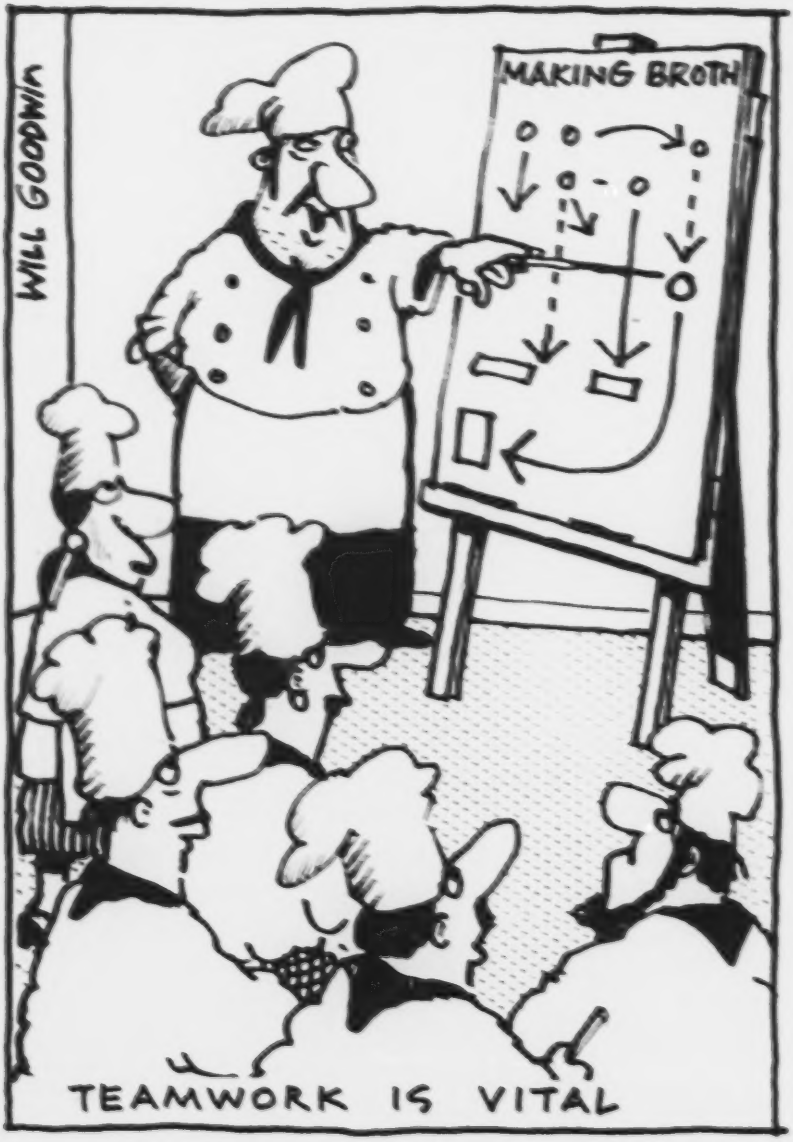
Suppliers can let you down at times. You might be really good at what you do, but if the food isn't there, you have to learn to compromise. They might have sent the wrong things, deliveries are late, or the quality isn't there. You have to cope and produce high quality food.

## HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOUR CO-WORKERS?

Teamwork is vital. Once we step through these doors, we forget about our outside problems. Otherwise you lag behind, and you must be alert at all times. A kitchen is a dangerous environment and accidents can happen. You must get along with everybody in a kitchen. There's no room for *contradictions* or jealousy.

This kitchen has very good teamwork. Split shifts for a chef can mean strain on marriages and friendships. My husband works evenings and I work during the day, but we have an understanding because we work in the same field.

A shift might start at 4 p.m. and go through to midnight and if a *spouse* doesn't work those hours, it can create pressures.


WILL GOODWIN
MAKING BROTH
TEAMWORK IS VITAL

We also need to wind down after work, and so tend to go out at 1 a.m. with the same people to another restaurant and do our *socialising* then. Due to working hours in the *hospitality* trade, most or our friends are involved in the industry.

**WHAT DEVELOPMENTS IN YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE AFFECTED YOU SO FAR?**

Equipment, such as the plate storage stand that can carry about 100 plates at a time. For functions when there's a limited space in a kitchen, this is very helpful. Chemicals for cleaning. These reduce cleaning time by half. Microwaves were a great invention. So were prepared mixes, and blenders. These are things which reduce preparation time.

READY TO
CARVE THE CHICKEN
MISS DOVE
WILL GOODWIN
HYGIENE IS ESSENTIAL

## HOW WILL CHANGES IN THE FUTURE AFFECT YOUR OCCUPATION?

With too much *technological* involvement, people might lose the basic skills if they don't keep up. New foods and new styles of presentation are increasing rapidly. Customers are making higher demands about what they want. Hospitality is the word and that's what you're giving. Standards are becoming higher and higher and more demand is placed on those providing the services.

Blending of cuisine is another development. Now there's Asian cuisine mixing with existing cuisines. New methods of preparation. Lots more spices and lots more colour.

People want something new in food. Health consciousness is another trend. More grilled food. More *variety* in oils and fats from the *distributors*. Everything must be fresh.

Legally you've got to be careful. People are more inclined to sue your company these days. So *hygiene* is very important.

## DO YOU LIKE TO WORK IN THE DAY OR THE EVENING?

Although I'm happy with my hours, I'd like to get back into the evening work as lunches are different from dinners. People who go out at different times of the day eat differently. A lot more happens at night.

For the hours that chefs work and the pressure, the award is too general and doesn't take enough into account. But a really good chef can *negotiate* his own salary.

Young apprentices get very little for long hours, when they do as much as others in the kitchen. Wages range from about $180 a week for a beginning *apprentice* up to an executive chef in a *five star* hotel with perhaps $1,400 per week.

**WHAT ARE THE GOOD THINGS ABOUT YOUR WORK?**

Hearing the comments that people make. '*Compliments* to the chef' or 'Table 8 loved the meal' is very satisfying. Or somebody comes in from a *V.I.P. luncheon* to compliment us. Sometimes the *General Manager* gives us an unexpected gift in *appreciation* of long, hard work. And he says 'I really appreciate your efforts.' That's very rewarding.

Generally when the team has had a long, hard day and we sit down at the end to talk it all over, that's satisfying. The presentation was good. The customers were enjoying the food. There were no problems.

**WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE FOR CHEFS?**

Getting into my own business. That is an *opportunity*. Formerly I was in a partnership, but a close friend wanted to join the restaurant and there wasn't room for three.

BY GOLLY, YOU'VE OUTDONE YOURSELF WITH THE COQ AU VIN TONIGHT PIERRE
WILL GOODWIN

I'd like to go overseas and bring back some of the trends in food. To bring in something new to Australia would be a challenge.

**IN WHAT WAY DOES YOUR WORK CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY?**

It keeps people fed and not bored. Eating doesn't have to be routine, it can be enjoyable. The more you go out to eat, the more ideas you collect and apply at home.

Whereas if you ate the same thing day in and day out, you'd be bored. Housewives or anyone who cooks regularly at home enjoy going out to a restaurant and being waited upon.

**IF YOU COULD START AGAIN WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS JOB?**

Yes. But the line to get there would have been different. An apprenticeship would have given more experience working under good chefs.

Being an airline hostess was another possibility.

A creative job, perhaps outdoors appeals to me. Maybe a salesperson because working with food you are constantly selling ideas.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER FOR THOSE ENTERING YOUR AREA OF WORK?**

Think seriously. There's a lot of time demanded from you. If you like a social life, split shifts can ruin this. If you're doing an apprenticeship get ready to be broke for quite a few years. If you want to achieve something during your apprenticeship, try to work overseas. Or work under good chefs in a five star hotel. Be versatile.

The work is physically hard, and you need to be creative. A natural skill is needed. Presentation can't be learnt. It's got to come from within you. Whether on the floor or in the kitchen, regarding it as a means to the end of going overseas to study doesn't work. You must give your best.

## WHAT KIND OF TRAINING IS THERE FOR APPRENTICES?

A four year apprenticeship during which they can move around. They can go to school one day a week or in *block releases*. There they learn the theory. *Alternatively,* they can go through T.A.F.E. colleges where the courses differ in *emphasis*: social welfare, hotel catering or food service itself.

Once the apprenticeship is finished, you can remain in the same restaurant or start as a cook elsewhere. Your salary depends upon your skills. There are different specialties within the kitchen.

Pastries and sweets, cold larder and the front - a la carte. Much depends upon the size of the kitchen, the number of staff and what the head chef sees you doing. Working in the kitchens you tend to move around in order to learn new skills and new *flair*.

**WHO DO YOU THINK CONTRIBUTES MOST IN OUR SOCIETY?**

The small person contributes the most. They're the ones that we're catering for at all times and the ones who make the demands. They're the ones who go out to work and put in their amount of productivity, and the ones for whom the politicians are running the country.

## GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| *a la carte* | *top class food* |
| *environment* | *surroundings* |
| *executive* | *person who has the power to manage* |
| *feedback* | *information passed on* |
| *home economics* | *domestic management* |
| *delve* | *inquire or search* |
| *nutritional* | *wholesome, nourishing* |
| *cuisine* | *style of cooking* |
| *theory* | *idea or explanation* |
| *compromise* | *agreeing by giving way a little* |
| *versatile* | *able to do a range of things* |
| *contradictions* | *refusal, denial* |
| *spouse* | *husband or wife or defacto* |
| *socialising* | *mixing with and talking with people* |
| *hospitality* | *friendly treatment of friends or strangers* |
| *technological* | *mechanical processes or machinery* |

## GLOSSARY CONTINUED

| | |
|---|---|
| *variety* | *difference* |
| *distributor* | *supplier of food* |
| *hygiene* | *cleanliness* |
| *negotiate* | *to discuss and bargain* |
| *apprentice* | *one learning a trade* |
| *five star* | *the best class hotel* |
| *compliments* | *praise* |
| *V.I.P.* | *very important person/s* |
| *luncheon* | *midday meal* |
| *General Manager* | *person who manages the whole organisation* |
| *appreciation* | *thinking well of you* |
| *opportunity* | *chance or opening* |
| *occupation* | *work or business* |
| *block releases* | *more than one day* |
| *alternatively* | *a choice* |
| *emphasis* | *special attention* |
| *flair* | *new style* |

Workdays is based on real people in real jobs. The aim of the series is to provide simply written, interesting and relevant material for new readers.

Author Hazel Edwards' method of researching is by interview and visiting the workplace.

Her previous one hundred books have included adult literacy, scripts, non-fiction, crime and childrens books. Currently she is researching other workplaces for more books in the ' day in a life of ' series.

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|---|---|
| Gardner : franchisee | Police |
| the Chef | Customs Officer |
| Vet Nurse | Family Garage Owner |
| Computer Salesman | Fruiterer |
| Offshore Platform Worker | Plumber |
| (current series) | (in production) |

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